



Jenn Wasko



Wendy Hicks Larson

# The ART of Being a Mom

Nobody has all the answers, but we spoke to a few moms who were happy to share some of their best tips for navigating the ups and downs on this fabulous roller coaster called motherhood

*Written by Lisa Westbrook | Select photography by Candace Cook*

Joy DeCandido



Jennifer Houghman



**E**very day they perform feats of logistics, resourcefulness, health maintenance, entertainment, and even crisis management. That special mom energy moves the world and changes lives as children grow into adults with their own challenges and successes. Although there is no perfect formula, these Katy Area moms were willing to share their best advice for how they get everything done and still manage to find time for themselves.

### **“DEDICATED TO MY FAMILY”**

Jenn Wasko describes herself as a frugal stay-at-home-mom, which she's been doing since her first child was born. Her three boys are 7, 4, and 18 months old. The oldest is in basketball and swim and the 4-year-old is in swim and gymnastics. The 7-year-old is also in Destination Imagination, a project-based learning program that incorporates STEM. Getting it all done takes the whole family, but she says, “This time of my life is dedicated to my family.” The boys have their own laundry baskets to put away their clothes. Her husband stops by the store when she's at home with the youngest napping. They have a gym membership that offers daycare so she and her husband can work out regularly. Wasko makes the best of quiet moments, game nights, and cookouts with family and neighbors.

**- JENN WASKO, Stay-at-Home Mom**

### **“TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF”**

As a mother of two girls, an 11-year-old in theatre and a 15-year-old in dance, with after school practice three to four days a week, Wendy Hicks Larson is able to manage schedules and finds her own groove to make things run smoothly. Larson shares, “You compensate, you adapt, you grow.” What she wants newer moms to know is, “It's okay. Not everything has to get done. It's not the end of the world. We all make mistakes. Take time for yourself.” Her husband helps a lot with math homework, dinner, and taking care of their animals. She's grateful now that her girls are older because they are able to take care of personal routines and chores. Larson credits her mom for the get-things-done spirit she's had for as long as she can remember.

**- WENDY HICKS LARSON**

**School-based Occupational Therapist**

### **“EAT TOGETHER AS A FAMILY”**

Joy DeCandido, a stay-at-home mom, has watched her child's passion for dance grow for some time. Her daughter started ballet when she was about 3 years old. Now she's in junior high and dances about 12 hours a week, going to the ballet center after school. She uses every minute with care. While her daughter's at ballet, DeCandido works with her son, who is a soccer player and excels in academics, on his

homework in the car. Joy says, “He's a nonfiction reader and a problem solver.” When they and her husband get home, her goal is to “eat together as a family as much as possible.” They may stay up until 9 p.m. if there is a show they all watch together, like *Curse of Oak Island*. Then its bed, wake up, repeat.

**- JOY DECANDIDO, Stay-at-Home Mom**

### **“DON'T WASTE MOMENTS”**

Aside from working a full-time job, Jennifer Houghman is also a Girl Scout co-leader and recently started teaching Saturday morning yoga classes. Her 9-year-old daughter is involved in Girl Scouts, rock painting, and nature explorations among other interests. “You don't waste moments,” she says. Whenever she's in a situation where she needs to wait, she has something with her that she could get done. She calls it “active waiting.” Houghman makes time for herself by getting up early; she's up at 4:15 a.m. to walk the dog then practice yoga, then she prepares breakfast and lunch. She and her husband tag team schedules and activities. “It's all about being gentle and bringing grace and ease into my life.”

**- JENNIFER HOUGHMAN**

**Healthcare Program Manager**

### **“KEEP ROLLING WITH PURPOSE”**

Even though Karen Layhew mostly works from home, her three children keep her busy and out of the house often. She has two sons, 15 and 13, and a 10-year-old daughter. Her sons are in football and her daughter is in competitive cheer. Layhew is also on the parent cheer team, and her daughter and she are at the gym four to five days a week. She does laundry every day to keep it from being too much on the weekends, packs lunches at night, puts coffee on the timer, and plans ahead for everything she can. Layhew gets it all done in an orderly fashion and says, “My kids are my world. My husband is my rock. My career is my obsession. These three things keep me rolling with purpose, with passion, with pride.”KM

**- KAREN LAYHEW**

**Develops Curriculum and Trains for a  
Telecommunications Company (Not Pictured)**



# Parenting Wisdom from Katy Moms

## KEEP LAUGHING

"As mad as you are right now, there will be a time in the future that you will laugh about it. It may be tomorrow or 10 years from now, but you will think back and laugh about it." - A.W.

## BE YOU

"Be the best mom you can be. Kids don't remember the details; they remember the love and each mom is unique, so be you - that's why you were chosen to be their mom." - D.R.

## LISTEN TO YOUR HEART

"Everyone will be quick to tell you what to do. Follow your heart." - R.A.

## ENJOY EACH MOMENT

"I try to remember to live by the saying 'Although the days are long, the years are short.' I embrace each moment, even the chaotic ones." - S.A.

## THERE'S NO COMPARISON

"Try your best not to compare yourself to what other moms are doing." - L.J.

## IT TAKES A VILLAGE

"Asking for help is a win not a fail." - K.S.

## YOU'RE A SURVIVOR

"You have survived 100% of your worst days. Enjoy every moment because children grow up fast." - Z.M.

## SOME THINGS ARE MORE IMPORTANT

"It's better to have a happy and healthy kid than to have a spotless house. Take a few extra moments to snuggle and play - time goes by way too quickly to miss out." - E.G.

## CELEBRATE YOUR CHILD

"Celebrate each child's gifts and uniqueness and don't try to force them into what you want them to be." - K.W.

## BE INVOLVED

"Be as involved as possible. Try to make it to all of those school functions no matter how busy life gets or how tired and worn out you may feel." - P.G.

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